



Community and Enterprise Resources

Lanarkshire LEADER Growing Business Theme Investment Approach: Rural Town Centres

January 2017

If you need this information in another language or format, please contact us to discuss how we can best meet your needs.

Phone: 0303 123 1015 Email: equalities@southlanarkshire.gov.uk

www.southlanarkshire.gov.uk

Background

South Lanarkshire's rural town centres [Biggar, Lanark, Strathaven and Carluke] are still attracting interest from the private sector, both in terms of investment in retail and in securing their future prospects through initiatives such as Business Improvement Districts and Conservation Area Regeneration Schemes. However, town centres are changing both in nature and function and face pressure to adapt to a new set of economic and social circumstances. In particular, changes to the way people shop and access many of their day to day services has been transformed by increasing use of the car, retail parks, out of centre superstores and most recently by the internet. Never the less, it is clear that in the rural centres, the quality of the place is becoming more important. The LDS survey work showed clearly that communities are still very committed to their towns and the town centre remains firmly at the heart of the communities.

SLC have recognised the need to develop the rural towns in a way that will sustain and retain them as rural service centres playing a key role in rural quality of life. No single intervention in isolation will suddenly create vitality in rural towns nor is LEADER the tool to address all these issues. Considerable SLC resources have been targeted at improving their attractiveness and competitiveness, for example through public realm schemes and joint ventures with private sector partners.

The Council recognise that each town centre has its own place within a hierarchy, and will work towards each town 'being the best it can be,' rather than supporting each to compete at a level that cannot be sustained. This will involve working closely with private sector owners and developers to focus on retaining a strong core in the rural town centres and support investment proposals which seek to deliver a mixture of uses compatible with their role as commercial and community focal points.

Existing Rural Initiatives

Carluke Business Improvement District [BID]

A Business Improvement District (BID) provides an opportunity for businesses to work together and invest collectively in local improvements and projects. A levy is paid by eligible businesses and organisations and this creates an investment fund that is locally controlled and managed through an independent BID company.

Carluke Business Improvement District was established in 2014 following a yes vote of 75% among Carluke's businesses and other organisations. Their mission is to improve the town centre for those who work in, shop and use the BID Area to access goods, services and amenities. They do this through various means, including grants to improve premises, promotion of local businesses services and local events. Carluke BID raises around £60,000 per annum from the levy.

Strathaven Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme [CARS]

South Lanarkshire Council in partnership with a number of local community groups [Strathaven CARS Partnership] and supported by Historic Environment Scotland [HES], has established a CARS initiative which aims to encourage the repair and enhancement of key properties and public realm within the central part of Strathaven Conservation Area. HES are contributing £625,000 to a £1.5 investment pot. This will be used to fund over a five year period :

- a small grant scheme for private property owners
- shop front improvements
- the repair of identified priority buildings
- education and training
- public realm improvements

The development of CARS involved an extensive community consultation that came out strongly in support of carrying out local heritage projects. As a result, the community backed CARS has been established aiming to create a sense of place, develop community and business interest in building design and repair and promote the conservation of both the town's buildings and character, and the community's pride.

Lanark Vision

This is a community developed strategic action plan being promoted through Lanark Community Development Trust that aims to build on Lanark's heritage and develop a 'brand' that attracts new visitors and harnesses community resources. It includes plans to establish:

- Heritage and sculpture walks... between Lanark and New Lanark that aim to build on walking as the most important and popular activity as far as Scotland's visitors are concerned.
- Castlebank Park and the Castlegate ... building on the Castlebank Park project - with the addition of the redevelopment of the Castlebank area as Lanark's "old town".
- High Street Revitalisation... Various initiatives aiming to attract more customers. In particular a focus on events and festivals.

The plan is still in development, however a BID is being considered as a means of implementing its ideas.

LEADER Investment approach

Despite the above investments and initiatives there is still an issue of how to maintain sustainable places and create a vibrant small town culture. This can be supported by collective action by empowered local groups and it is this aspect which LEADER will support in Lanarkshire. LEADER can nurture capacity building in local groups which strengthens their capacity to act in ways that promote revitalisation. It can also bring together disparate groups of businesses in trader/interest groups in ways that develop a more cohesive sense of place.

The success of Lanarkshire's rural towns does not simply rest with the condition of their centres. They must also offer suitable employment opportunities with an attractive and appropriate mix of housing, shopping, schools, civic and professional services, amenities, roads and transportation and environment. There is not a role for LEADER in addressing these wider issues but it can support initiatives that recognise that integrated social, commercial and environmental improvements can collectively improve the commercial vitality and viability of towns if they are community led and based on identified community priorities.

The niche for LEADER support is to make appropriate investments that aim to improve the operation and attractiveness of rural centres and that are additional to other support, both in terms of funding and nature. LEADER should therefore focus on:

1. **Soft revenue based development support.** This would support staff and operational costs of co- ordination activities in relation to initiatives such as BIDs or events.
2. **Facility development.** Community led developments identified as priorities with LEADER initially supporting the early stage planning and development process leading in appropriate cases to LEADER acting as a gap capital investor.
3. **Community led place improvements.** Physical realm improvements identified as community priorities through community action plans. Care will need to be taken to ensure that these investments are not replacing local authority statutory obligations or replacing public funding.

Approved by LAG 17 January 2017

Lanarkshire LEADER Programme

Regeneration Services

Community and Enterprise Resources

South Lanarkshire Council

David Dale's House

New Lanark

ML11 9DJ

01555 665064/661555

leader@southlanarkshire.gov.uk